

EXHIBIT 36

I N T R O D U C T I O N

B Y R O Y T H O M A S

Some things just tend to fall through the cracks.

I mean, when you've put together like a zillion hardcover *Marvel Masterworks* over the past decade or so, there are things that didn't quite...*fit*. No problems with *Fantastic Four*, *Incredible Hulk*, and the like...or, really, with the Golden Age...and as for the Atlas Era—well, you've just got to pick and choose, depending on what you think is worth preserving first. (And when I say “you,” I don't mean “I”...I'm referring to *Masterworks* editor Cory Sedlmeier and his team. They do the heavy lifting, digging up rare, hard-to-find items like *All-Winners Comics* #21 and later issues of *Venus*.)

And, speaking of “rare”: this volume is titled *Marvel Masterworks: Marvel Rarities, Vol. 1*, so a more than usual percentage of it was difficult to track down. But Cory—with yours truly enthusiastically concurring—believes that each and every story, every pinup and ad page that follows is worth collecting between hard covers. And we kinda suspect you will, too.

Take the Dr. Droom stories, for instance—and no, that's not a typo.

In spring of 1961, just a few months before *The Fantastic Four* #1 hit the nation's newsstands and changed comics forever, writer/editor Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby cocreated their *first* ongoing hero series. Dr. Droom was a medical man who journeyed to “the snow-capped Himalayas” in search of a Tibetan lama. There, he faced a series of mystic tests and became the lama's disciple and spiritual heir, “the nemesis of all occult powers that are sinister and corrupt.”

If this sounds familiar—well, it very much pre-echoes the origin of Dr. Strange, who wouldn't make his debut for another couple of years, drawn by another top artist, Steve Ditko. How much the later story owes, either consciously or un-, to the earlier one is a matter of conjecture, but there you are.

Naturally, as a precursor of the F.F. in one sense and Stephen Strange in another, Dr. Droom's five adventures are clearly worth preserving. Actually, they were collected between hard covers in 2007's *Amazing Fantasy Omnibus*, which reprinted the whole run of the magazine that started off as *Amazing Adventures*. Even so, we felt they belonged in this non-omnibus volume.

A footnote: In 1975-76, in the final issues of reprint title *Weird Wonder Tales*, writer Roger Stern got the bright idea to repackage the Dr. Droom tales. To avoid confusion between his moniker and that of another, somewhat better-known Marvel entity, Roger rechristened him Dr. Druid—who was even redrawn to give him a colorful costume. When the original stories ran out, Dr. Druid was shoehorned into reprints of Lee-Kirby monster epics and Atlas horror tales. Further adaptations might have followed, but at that point *WWT* was cancelled, and Dr. Druid soon entered the Marvel Universe in earnest, in *The Avengers*. The new *WWT* covers and the sole, new splash page are spotlighted in the back of the book, as well. Nothing's too good for Marveldom Assembled, as Stan used to call it!

Uncollected up 'til now has been another series that didn't quite fit anywhere else—“Tales of the Watcher,” that ran in the back pages of ten 1964 issues of *Tales of Suspense*, behind Iron Man. The Watcher first appeared in *Fantastic Four* #13 (April '63), but it didn't take editor Stan long to figure out that readers might better warm to five-page fantasy tales if some of them were introduced by that tall weird guy who spent most of his time hanging out on the dark side of the moon.

Thus, in *TOS* #49 (Jan. 1964), he assigned his talented brother Larry Lieber to pencil—and script—Watcher stories based on his plots...“by special arrangement with *Fantastic Four* magazine,” which

was just a sly way to plug the company's flagship title. As inked by George Roussos and others, the series has its moments...even if, as the name of a race of interstellar aliens, "the Sneepers" isn't exactly up to the nomenclatural standards of "Skrull" and the still-unseen "Kree."

But Stan soon found he wasn't content simply to have the Watcher rattle on about what he'd seen. In *TOS* #53 we got an origin story, revealing why his people became "a race of Watchers—observing and recording, but never partaking in the affairs of others!" From that point, the series switched to one in which the Watcher's actions—even his *inaction*—were crucial to the proceedings, even as he somehow always managed to stay true to his stated mission of passive observation. At times, he seemed almost a living embodiment of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle: that one affects a phenomenon simply by witnessing and measuring it. Not, I suspect, that that's what Stan and/or Larry had in mind.

Stan fully wrote only the very last Watcher story, in *TOS* #58, which was drawn by George Tuska, a couple of years before he returned to regular drawing for Marvel.

Reading over these stories, I can visualize Stan quickly getting bored with having the Watcher be merely a narrator, so that his origin becomes an inevitability. That done, Stan sets himself a task each month to find an inventive way to utilize and/or circumvent the Watcher's self-imposed limitations. He succeeded, I think, in #53-58—but it was a heckuva lot of work just for a five-page backup feature. I suspect he wasn't sorry when a Captain America solo feature took over the back half of *Tales of Suspense*.

Four years later, when Marvel was expanding, *The Silver Surfer* title was introduced as a 64-page comic instead of a 32-pager (not counting covers), with approximately 50 pages for story material. For some reason, Stan decided there should be a dozen-page backup feature, instead of a 50-page Surfer saga.

But what to put in a comic for which a reader was paying a whole quarter instead of 15 cents? With John Buscema artwork up front, you didn't want a falling off in quality in the comic's back pages. So Stan brought back "Tales of the Watcher" to expand some of the better back-of-the-book stories from the past, mostly not ones from the previous Watcher stories (except for the origin in #1). Gene Colan penciled the first three—a definite plus. Later installments were drawn by comics veteran Howard Purcell (who'd created the not-dissimilar "Just a Story"/"Johnny Peril" features for DC years earlier)...Golden Age *Captain America* artist Syd Shores...and Tom Palmer, then making a name for himself inking Colan's pencils on *Doctor Strange*.

Palmer's Watcher story, however, fell victim to bad timing. Perhaps hampered by the extra size (and price), sales of *The Silver Surfer* had fallen off, and publisher Martin Goodman demoted it overnight to a regular-length 15-center. Stan had to chop his and Buscema's Flying Dutchman epic in two, and Tom's Watcher tale was cut from 10 pages to six and run in the otherwise-reprint *Marvel Super-Heroes* #23. Fortunately, two of its four "lost" pages have survived and are seen—albeit in black-and-white—in this very volume. (What is more of a *rarity* than a story—or at least parts of one—that's lain unseen for nearly half a century?)

The third previously published series that's made it into this *Rarities* volume is titled—Dr. Doom. And no, *that's* not a typo, either.

Victor von Doom had been so popular, ever since his first appearance in *Fantastic Four* #5, that it was almost inevitable that, sooner or later, he'd get a stab at having his own comic book. And he almost did.

First came the Dr. Doom yarn in what became the final issue of *Marvel Super-Heroes* (#20, May

1969) featuring new stories. After two issues had introduced Marvel's own Captain Marvel (the one whose real name was Mar-Vell) and its third had showcased a Ross Andru-penciled Spider-Man story, each issue of *MSH* spotlighted a character seen as having potential for solo stardom: Medusa (of the Inhumans), the Phantom Eagle (a World War I aviator), the modern-day, heroic Black Knight (recently introduced in *The Avengers* and in need of a backstory), the Guardians of the Galaxy (and there's a weird story behind *that* one, but this isn't the place to tell it), Ka-Zar, and finally—Doc Doom.

Larry Lieber was halfway through writing and penciling the 24-page story when, for some forgotten reason, he had to relinquish the assignment. Stan asked me to finish it, working with artist Frank Giacoia. I had no notes from Larry as to what occurred on the very next page, but I came up with something. I was kinda pleased by the way it turned out.

In early 1970, Stan got another brainstorm (he was kinda prone to them, as I'd been discovering ever since I'd been piped aboard the Marvel ship in 1965). I don't recall this myself, but evidence suggests that Marvel was planning to put out four new comics—*The Inhumans*, *Black Widow*, *Ka-Zar*, and *Dr. Doom*—three of whose stars, if you count Medusa as a stand-in for the Inhumans, had received auditions earlier in *MSH*. But then it was decided Marvel was expanding too fast, and there could be only two new mags; so Stan decided it was time to try out the two-feature title again. It had been *two whole years* since *Tales of Suspense*, *Tales to Astonish*, and *Strange Tales* had split to become six magazines instead of three.

So the Inhumans and Black Widow were put into a new *Amazing Adventures*...while Ka-Zar and Dr. Doom would divide *Astonishing Tales* (which is *Tales to Astonish* written sideways) between them.

I don't recall much about the two initial Dr. Doom stories I wrote for the latter, except that they were basically artist Wally Wood's stories, which I merely dialogued, at Stan's request. He wasn't wild about the idea of Wally scripting the story as well as drawing it, so he put me on it to rein Wally in, if necessary. Stan was always glad to have Wally working for Marvel...although it must be admitted that Wally was generally less than thrilled by the prospect.

I myself never had any real rapport with Wally—he just considered me a stand-in for Stan, and he and Stan had always had, at best, an ambivalent relationship. I never even felt comfortable enough with him to call him by his familiar nickname of “Woody.” So, being busy with other features, I begged off Dr. Doom after two issues, and Larry took over the scripting. Instead of Stan Lee's associate editor, Wally got Stan Lee's brother. Things worked out pretty well.

Except that Stan, as the editor responsible to the publisher for the contents of each and every Marvel comic, felt Wally was putting a bit less of himself into the strip every issue—or that maybe an artistic assistant of his might be putting in more. So Stan had me talk to Wally and try to get him to assure us that, for the relatively top rate he was getting, he was penciling as well as inking the strip himself. I tried to be as tactful about it as I could—but the end result was that Wally Wood immediately quit Dr. Doom, just as I'd feared he'd do.

Still, he'd turned out four good installments. After George Tuska filled the breach for two issues, Gene Colan did the next two, with scripts written by young newcomer Gerry Conway. Then, with #9, *Astonishing Tales* became an all-Ka-Zar book, and Victor von Doom went back to dreaming up new plots against the Fantastic Four.

One other story (or at least part of one) is included in this volume: Starhawk. You can see the seven pages of the yarn that still exist, as well as an intended cover, on pp. 272-279.

I conceived Starhawk in early 1969, when Stan asked me to come up with a new character to introduce in *Marvel Super-Heroes*. I crafted it with artist Dan Adkins—who, incidentally, had been one of the aforementioned Wally Wood's eager young assistants (often penciling stories for Wally to ink) only a few years earlier. Starhawk was a science-fiction concept, and Dan had made a name for himself doing illustration for science-fiction magazines.

About all I recall of my story at this late stage is that it was set in a dystopian future in which Starhawk was a costumed guerrilla, battling living computers, robots, androids, and other inhuman, post-human, dehumanizing creatures which luddites were warning us lay in wait to ambush mankind's future. I coined a term for some of them—"mandroids"—which I'd use again in *Captain Marvel* #18 (Nov. '69), then in *The Avengers* #94-95 in 1971.

I do recall the ending of the Starhawk tale. As his calling card and catch-phrase, I was going to use a variation on an expression that was going around at the time: "I am a human being. Do not fold, staple, or mutilate." Maybe the whole project would've turned out better than it seems to me in retrospect. Dan's artwork was nice, anyway. But the story was doomed.

Publisher Goodman didn't care much for science-fiction as a series genre. Back in the 1950s he'd put out SF comics like *Space Squadron* and *Speed Carter, Spaceman* (as a kid, I'd really liked the former) and an anthology title called *Journey into Unknown Worlds*. Bombs, every one of them—all cancelled after a few issues, or else rerouted from science-fiction to horror, a better-selling genre.

We had prepared a house ad for *MSH* #20 to herald the Starhawk story coming next issue. Dan had drawn a cover, which for some reason Goodman saw around the time *MSH* #20 was going to the printer. He told whoever showed it to him—probably production manager Sol Brodsky—that the cover contained three things he didn't like: "rockets, ray guns, and robots." And he cancelled Starhawk and *Marvel Super-Heroes* became a reprint-only title, just like that. It hadn't been selling all that well anyway, and as far as he was concerned, he'd merely be throwing good money after bad.

So the Starhawk story—which I doubt was ever completed—went on the shelf. Eventually the existing pages were printed in an issue of Marvel's fanzine *Marvelmania*. Later, my old buddy Steve Gerber and artist Sal Buscema made up a new character to go with the name. Fine by me. I was done with it.

Writing the above re: short-run series like Dr. Droom, the Watcher, Dr. Doom, and (if he counts) Starhawk had made me think about other rarities that *could* be included in this volume, or a second one, *if* we still had the material.

There was, for example, a second story starring the modern-day, heroic Black Knight that I wrote with artist Howard Purcell as a sequel to our effort in *MSH* #18. It was fully plotted and penciled—even written, after a fashion.

Y'see, I'd accidentally been paid for dialoguing that second Knight story before I'd actually done it—not my, or Marvel's, usual practice, I assure you. And one day circa 1971, I got a call at home from production manager John Verpoorten. The bean-counters from the conglomerate wanted to see all not-yet-printed-but-paid-for scripts and art pages, so he needed me to bring in the script for that story the next day. "No problem," I said. I knew the accountants wouldn't *read* the blamed thing, so I decided to play a little joke. I deliberately typed out the most cliché-filled script I could, as fast as I could bat it out, laughing all the while. All I recall now is that I called the villain the Netsman, and I had him end every one of his dialogue balloons by declaiming his own name after a dramatic pause: "—the Netsman!" At one point where Purcell had drawn a closeup of the head of the Knight's winged stallion, I gave it a thought balloon: "My master is in trouble!" Stuff like that.

I turned it and the penciled art in to John the next day, telling him that, if and when that story was ever taken off the shelf, he must let me know and I'd write a new and better script right away. But maybe the accountants lost the art and script, because I never saw either again. And if *you* ever see either turn up on eBay, I beg of you...just click to the next for-sale item! (But y'know, I *would* still kinda like to take a serious stab at scripting that story. It's only been a little over forty years, after all.)

There are lots of other concepts, developed by talented people, that didn't quite make the cut... maybe got partly plotted or even scripted...maybe even partially drawn...only to vanish into limbo. Maybe not a fully penciled 20-pager like my Black Knight one...but with some work done to it. Maybe such items should bring up the rear in a future *Marvel Masterworks* edition of *What If?*.

That way, at least the Watcher could narrate it!

Cory Sedlmeier, who put together this volume for the Mighty Marvel Reprint Department, has also gathered a lot of wonderful odds-and-ends to round it out. Ads and announcements related to the Merry Marvel Marching Society, that wonderful, first Marvel fan club. (I'm just sorry they can't include a CD of the recording Stan and the Bullpen made one day circa 1964-65. That would be a rarity, indeed.)

The Merry Marvel Messenger was fun, too—an occasional sheet mailed out to MMMS members with a lot of amiable hype and sometimes a tidbit of information. I'd long since forgotten that Jack Kirby biography page, which was a real hoot! And, is a No-Prize printed in this volume? What Cory *did* find preserves a clear snapshot of what it was like to be a Marvelite in the first decade of what Stan Lee dubbed "the Marvel Age of Comics." Me, I was a charter MMMSer, months before I entered the field.

I'll admit, I'm probably more nostalgic these days about the 11 years I spent in New York, working for Marvel up close and personal (as opposed to the years from mid-1976 on, when I merely mailed my scripts in from L.A.) than I once was. There was something magic about that time—for Stan, certainly—but also for those of us who, as bright-tailed, bushy-eyed youngsters, writers and artists alike, were turned loose in the fabulous playground that was Marvel Comics.

I'm thrilled—I really am!—for Marvel's success in recent years with its film ventures. I don't go see that many action pics these days, but I've made it to all the major Marvel movies—in 3-D, when possible—and I've seen the first *Avengers* movie twice at theatres, even before I bought the DVD.

Still, I think it's good to look back at all the madness and magic that Marvel was generating during its first decade, when Stan and Jack and Steve and Don and Dick and Sol and Flo and Artie and even those of us who came in late were having a ball—under no pressure other than to turn out a good story that a kid or an adult might want to spend a half hour with.

Good times like those—now they're *real* rarities!



2014

Roy Thomas started working for Stan Lee at Marvel on the Friday after the July 4th weekend of 1965. He considers it one of the best days of his life so far.